

Monday

Read Hebrews 10:19-25

This passage in Hebrews is part of the longer, central argument of the Book of Hebrews, which uses the old Hebrew sacrificial system of the Old Testament for most of its reference points. The central argument is essentially that Jesus Christ is our great high priest, is the once and for all sacrifice for our sins and is the one making us right with God. Jesus is including us in God's people and Old Testament-type sacrifices are no longer necessary because Jesus is our sacrifice. This new identity in God through Christ then welcomes us through the curtain (v 20) and into the holy places (v. 19) that were once reserved for only a few.

In light of all of that, we shouldn't simply decide that since Christ is our sacrifice that there isn't anything for us to do. We should "stir up one another to love and good works (v. 23)" and to do that we must not neglect to meet together but get together to encourage each other (v. 25).

This year has made it difficult to be present with one another and we can feel our mental and spiritual health suffer as a result. We need to continue to make wise decisions for ourselves, our church, and each other that support our health in the midst of this pandemic.

But how will you get creative and Spirit-inspired to be present with your church family? How will you use your gifts, talents, and resources to allow your presence to be felt?

Tuesday

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

The word Paul uses for love in this passage is *agape* which tends to get translated as brotherly love but that isn't a great translation. *Agape* is selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love. It is the term used for love in John 3:16: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. *Agape* is the love that Jesus has for us and it is the love Paul describes in both scriptures passages we read. It is the highest form of love and expressed not only with emotions but with actions.

To love with an *agape* love is to make a commitment to love; a strong, unbreaking commitment that is selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional. Scripture teaches us that this is the love we should have for our brothers and sisters in the church. That might be a higher bar than you were thinking for your church family, but there it is. What is the next step in committing to *agape* for your family, friends, and church?

Wednesday

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

Since you and I are new creations, formed by Christ in his workshop to respond to his love, we should offer our love to one another through the ways God has given us to share our love and build stronger community. The gifts, talents, and resources you have been given should be used in two ways: to love God and to love others. When we are loving God properly, we are loving others. When we are loving each other properly, we are loving God. You have had some gifts, talents, and abilities that have developed and endured throughout your life. You have some that have faded away over time and some that have grown fresh in their place. These are the things you bring to God's community as your offering of *agape* to build for the future. What do you have to offer?

Thursday

See below

God's Adventure to the Future looks strikingly like the ways of Jesus lived out for us so long ago. It is a transformational adventure like the one Abram obediently took with God. It is the faith of Moses and Paul to go into the unknown. It is the courage to stay faithful to God's mission in the midst of quick changes like Joshua displayed. It is the radical forgiveness Hosea demonstrates. It is living out the mercy of Jesus to each other and to society. And it is the strength to remain present in community, the commitment to love the people of the church selflessly, sacrificially, and unconditionally, and it is the willingness to use the gifts you have been given to build a love that lasts generations.

Look to past devotionals (cooks creekchurch.org/sermons) for scripture that we've examined in this series and choose a few to read again that speak to your heart as you are on God's adventure.

Friday – please read and reflect upon Genesis 17;1-7, 15-16 & Romans 4:13-25 as we head towards Sunday worship.